

Message Text

SECRET

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63/40

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-07 NSCE-00 PM-03 DODE-00

CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SP-02 AID-10 IGA-01

OMB-01 EB-03 TRSE-00 COME-00 OPIC-02 CIEP-01 DPW-01

L-02 PRS-01 SR-02 ORM-01 DRC-01 /078 W

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R 281057Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 565

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 6691

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y --PARA THREE --

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, EAID, MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT

1. IN THE COURSE OF A LONG MEETING WITH FONMIN PHOUMI VONGVICHIT THIS MORNING, I REVIEWED THE POLICIES THE U.S. MISSION HAS BEEN PURSUING EVER SINCE MY ARRIVAL. I WANTED PHOUMI TO UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH OF THE CRITICISM REGARDING THE SIZE OF THE U.S. MISSION AND THE SCOPE OF ITS ACTIVITIES IS UNWARRANTED.

2. I OPENED BY EXPLAINING THE PURPOSE OF MY VISIT AND DISCUSSED THE PERSONNEL REDUCTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE. I TOLD PHOUMI THAT AMERICANS IN THE MISSION HAD GONE FROM OVER 1,100 TO SLIGHTLY OVER 400 IN THE COURSE OF THE PAST YEAR. I STATED THAT I WAS MINDFUL OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH TCN'S WERE SOMETIMES RESENTED AND DREW HIS ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT WE HAD REDUCED

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TCN'S FROM OVER 220 TO LESS THAN A HUNDRED, COMMENT-

ING THAT THE REMAINDER WERE LARGELY ACCOUNTANTS AND ENGINEERS FOR WHOM NO SUBSTITUTES COULD BE FOUND, ALTHOUGH WE WOULD CONTINUE TO SEEK TO REDUCE THIS NUMBER.

3. I THEN EXPLAINED TO PHOUMI THE MEASURES TAKEN BY USAID DIRECTOR MANN AND ME LAST YEAR TO HAVE MANY MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS PREVIOUSLY FINANCED BY USAID INCLUDED IN THE RLG BUDGET. I DESCRIBED OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO HAVE THE RLG ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL, THE MAINTENANCE OF NAVIGATIONAL BEACONS AND THE STAFFING OF AIRPORT FIRE ENGINES. I RECOUNTED THE TALKS WE HAD OPENED LAST NOVEMBER WITH THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH TO SEE WHETHER A REALIGNMENT OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE IN THIS FIELD WAS DESIRABLE, NOTED THAT AID WAS GOING OUT OF THE ROAD BUILDING BUSINESS, AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THE LAO PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FURTHER CONSTRUCTION AND FOR ROAD MAINTENANCE. I CITED AS AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM THE NEED FOR PUBLIC WORKS TO TAKE OVER MAINTENANCE OF THE NEW LONG TIENG ROAD, EXPRESSING MY DESIRE TO INVITE THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR A VISIT TO THE ROAD AND THE AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION CAMP. I CLOSED BY SAYING I SHOULD BE DELIGHTED TO REVIEW ANY OR ALL ACTIVITIES IN GREATER DETAIL BUT THAT I WISHED TO GIVE HIM AN OVERALL UNDERSTANDING OF THE STEPS BEING TAKEN TO REDUCE THE AMERICAN PRESENCE AND TO REDUCE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN MANY FIELDS.

4. PHOUMI APPEARED TO BE IMPRESSED WITH THIS STATEMENT AND REPLIED AT SOME LENGTH TO THE EFFECT THAT LAOS WOULD CONTINUE TO NEED AID FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME, THAT THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF FOREIGN EXPERTS WAS ESSENTIAL, AND THAT THE LAO WERE GRATEFUL FOR THE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE THEY WERE RECEIVING. HE THEN SPOKE IN VERY GENERAL TERMS REGARDING HIS HOPES FOR THE FUTURE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE KINGDOM, EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN AGRICULTURE AND HIS HOPES FOR SOME INVESTMENTS IN LIGHT INDUSTRY.

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5. PHOUMI THEN TURNED TO THE TRADITIONAL TOPIC OF COUP D'ETATS BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME HE AFFIRMED THAT WHILE HE WAS STILL RECEIVING REPORTS ON PLOTTING BY THE ULTRA-RIGHTISTS, HE BELIEVED THE ATMOSPHERE WAS FAR BETTER THAN IT HAD BEEN IN THE PAST.

6. I RETURNED TO THE QUESTION OF THE ECONOMIC DE-

VELOPMENT WHICH MIGHT TAKE PLACE, GIVEN THE RE-
ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE, NOTING THAT THERE WAS A LOT
OF TALK ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF DEPOSITS OF VARIOUS
MINERALS AND EVEN OF OIL. IT SEEMED TO ME TO BE A
MATTER OF VERY GREAT URGENCY TO ESTABLISH THE NATURE
AND EXTENT OF THESE DEPOSITS IN ORDER THAT FUTURE
PLANS REGARDING THEIR EXPLOITATION MAY BE MADE.
PHOUMI AGREED AND COMMENTED THAT KEY PROBLEM WOULD
BE TO CREATE TRANSPORTATION ROUTES OVER WHICH THE
ORE COULD BE CARRIED. HE THEN DISCOURSED AT LENGTH
ON THE NEED FOR TECHNICALLY TRAINED LAO CADRE AND
THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO EDUCATION AND A FAR-
FLUNG PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM.

7. I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT
IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE COUNTRY WOULD NOT
BE DELAYED BY POLITICAL EXERCISES LIKE IMPLANTING
OF CEASEFIRE STAKES. PHOUMI ANSWERED THAT HE HAD
INFORMED SOTH PHETRASY THAT IN HIS VIEW THE DE-
LINEATION OF THE CEASEFIRE LINE WAS PROCEEDING TOO
SLOWLY AND HAD ORDERED HIM TO MOVE ON TO OTHER
MATTERS IN THE JOINT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCORDS.
IT IS AS A RESULT OF THIS DIRECTIVE THAT DECISIONS
HAVE NOW BEEN TAKEN WITH REGARD TO AN EXCHANGE OF
PRISONERS ON SEPTEMBER 12. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE
QUESTION OF IDENTIFICATION OF GRAVE SITES AND
MIA WOULD BE RAISED. I SAID THIS APPEARED TO ME
TO BE AN EXCELLENT IDEA AS THE STAKES ISSUE WAS NOT
REALLY ONE WHICH DESERVED PROLONGED ATTENTION.

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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LIMDIS

8. I THEN TURNED TO THE QUESTION OF REFUGEES IN MR II AND TOLD PHOUMI THAT AS I SAW THEIR SITUATION THEY WOULD HARVEST UPLAND RICE THIS FALL AND PLANT AGAIN IN THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS. THIS MEANT THAT THEY WOULD REQUIRE ASSISTANCE WELL INTO 1976. I ALSO EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT REGARDING THEIR WILLINGNESS TO RETURN TO THE MISTY HILLTOPS WHENCE THEY HAD COME. PHOUMI AGREED WITH MY COMMENTS AND SAID ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE MADE SOON TO LET THOSE WHO WANTED TO GO HOME. THESE PEOPLE SHOULD NOT REMAIN ON INTERNATIONAL WELFARE FOREVER BUT GETTING THEM ESTABLISHED IN THEIR NEW HOMES WOULD BE A MAJOR ORGANIZATION FEAT AND WOULD REQUIRE AIRCRAFT SUPPORT AS WELL AS MATERIALS OF ALL KIND. THE RLG SHOULD ADDRESS THE QUESTION ON A PRIORITY BASIS.

9. I THEN RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE RELEASE OF POW EMMET KAY WHICH WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE.

10. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PHOUMI HAS ALWAYS BEEN CORDIALLY
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POLITE, THE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS CONVERSATION WAS DIFFERENT THAN ANY I HAVE HAD HERETOFORE. THE TOPIC OF U.S. ACTIVITY AND U.S. PRESENCE WAS ONE WHICH COULD HAVE ELICITED A DIFFERENT RESPONSE AND THE COMMENTS HE MADE AFTER MY PRESENTATION LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE ACQUIRING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR DEPENDENCE ON AMERICAN ASSISTANCE. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE HANDLED THE DOG-EARED QUESTION OF COUPS WAS ALSO INDICATIVE OF GREATER CONFIDENCE AND TRUST. PHOUMI AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE CLEARLY NOT CHANGED THEIR OUTLOOK IN ANY FUNDAMENTAL WAY BUT I FOUND THE FOREGOING SATISFACTORY.
WHITEHOUSE

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